

Table 3: Summary of the Brambling sightings around Dharamsala

Date	Number	Height (m)	Place	Migration
4.xi.1997	3	3300	Ilaka	
24.x.1999	1	2800	Ghalu	
7.xi.1999	2	2800	Ghalu	
10.xi.1999	1	2200	Dharmkot	East
16.xi.1999	2	3300	Ilaka	SE
3.i.2000	2	1300	Kanyara	
1.xi.2000	1	2200	Dharmkot	
7.xi.2000	1	2200	Dharmkot	
28.xi.2000	2	2400	Leta	SE
15.xi.2000	2	2400	Leta	
4.xi.2001	2	1900	McLeod Ganj	SE
8.xi.2001	1	1900	McLeod Ganj	

tjuk” or “chu, chu, chu”, often in rows of three syllables each, but also in rows of more syllables. Calls later in the morning, under the warm sun, were interspersed with the more musical notes that are part of their song.

The one observation from the higher parts of the district concerned 3 birds flying up from a bush-covered hillside at 2,400 m around 0800 hrs. This was the first clear morning after the first significant snowfall of the season and saw a strong southeastward movement of over 10,000 Hodgson’s Mountain-Finch (*Leucosticte nemoricola*) and Altai Accentor (*Prunella himalayana*).

Having surveyed bird life in the higher parts of Kangra district since 1996 and only focusing on the lowest areas since 2001, I didn’t come across the Eurasian Linnet before. It will be interesting to see whether more invasions take place in the future and whether like the Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) we find indications of an expansion in their wintering range through the northwestern Himalaya.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

The Chaffinch I have observed yearly around Dharamsala, mostly during migration time (Table 2). Identification was in most cases obvious through the double white wing-bars (white on lesser and greater coverts), greyish rump, dull brown underparts (female) and salmon underparts (male) with bluish-grey crown. Most of the birds that were seen perching called the characteristic, loud “tink, tink”, while several of the seemingly migrating ones often made a short stay in the treetops and called. In flight, they invariably made their soft “tup, tup” calls.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Though less common than Chaffinch, the Brambling is also a regular migrant / winter visitor in small numbers (Table 3). While the dark head pattern and white rump are the most obvious field marks on which I conclusively identified some of these sightings, the characteristic call formed the basis for identification of the other sightings (apart from the typical nasal “gheep” call, which all the birds sighted used the “tuk, tuk” call is different from the similar call of the Chaffinch). I am very familiar with all these calls from Europe.

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JAN WILLEM DEN BESTEN
Schaikseweg 83, 4143 HD Leerdam,
The Netherlands.
Present Address: Kuldeep House,
McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala 176 219,
Himachal Pradesh,
India.
Email: Denbesten888@hotmail.com

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24. RECORDS OF SOME NEW AVIAN SPECIES IN THE THAR DESERT OF RAJASTHAN

The Thar desert, located in western India, is a predominantly sandy hot desert. It is unique because the fauna is an admixture of the Saharan, Palaearctic and Oriental elements. After the Indira Gandhi Nahar Pariyojana (IGNP) became operational, large-scale ecological changes have occurred in the desert, due to plantation in the canal area and creation of wetlands, some of them perennial, because of mismanagement and seepage of water.

This paper is based on four surveys conducted between

November 2000 and February 2001 in Jaisalmer and Bikaner districts of Rajasthan. A study of the impact of ecological changes on the avifauna in the command area and its surroundings, revealed that a number of forest and aquatic birds never noticed about a decade ago are now common.

According to Rahmani (1997), the habitat changes in the area can be categorized into four groups: a. Change in crop pattern from subsistence farming to commercial farming;

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Table 1: New records of birds in the Thar Desert, Rajasthan

S. No.	Common name	Scientific Name	Previous Record (Rahmani, 1997)	Author's Observation
1	Marbled Teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	Not Reported	Ten individuals seen at 1140 RD, Escape Reservoir, Jaisalmer, 23.ii.2001
2	Ferruginous Pochard	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Eight birds from Gujarat, Guda-Vishnoian and Kolayat	Two individuals seen in IGNP Main Canal 15 km towards Sultana lake
3	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Not reported	One individual seen on Digga lake, Mohangarh, Jaisalmer, 24.ii.2001
4	Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Only call heard, 15.vii.1993 near Lankaransar, Bikaner	One individual seen at Depression No. 7, 2.xii.2000
5	White-tailed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	Two birds in Gajner, 16.i.1994, three in Badopal, 19.i.1994. Two birds in Seepage water at 507 RD, 20.i.1994	Three individuals seen at 1356 RD, Escape Reservoir, Jaisalmer, 22.ii.2001
6	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	One bird near Sambhar Lake, 14.i.1991, three birds on seepage at 507 RD, 20.i.1994	Six individuals seen at 1140 RD Escape Reservoir, Jaisalmer, 23.ii.2001
7	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	Two individuals recorded in Guda Vishnoian, 7.iii.1994	Two individual seen at Digga Lake, Mohangarh, Jaisalmer, 24.ii.2001
8	Lesser Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	One individual seen inside Suratgarh town, 19.i.1994	Two individuals seen at 1356 RD, Escape Reservoir, Jaisalmer, 22.ii.2001
9	Small Blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	One bird seen at village tank near Kolayat, 17.i.1994	One individual seen at Digga Lake, Mohangarh, Jaisalmer, 15.i.2001
10	Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	One individual seen near Rolsabsar, Fatehpur, Dist. Sikar, 4.ii.1993	Two individuals seen at 582 RD, Chhattargarh, Bikaner, 3.xii.2000
11	Grey-headed Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	Not reported	Five individuals seen at 582 RD, Chhattargarh, Bikaner, 3.xii.2000
12	White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>	One bird seen near 820 RD, 21.i.1994; one bird seen near Mohangarh, 4.iii.1994; one bird seen near Chhattargarh in IGNP plantation, 15.vii.1994	Four individuals seen at 582 RD, Chhattargarh, Bikaner on 3.xii.2000
13	Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Not reported	One individual seen at 582 RD near Chhattargarh, Bikaner, 3.xii.2000
14	White-capped Redstart	<i>Chaimarrornis leucocephalus</i>	Not reported	507 RD heard in Bikaner, 4.xii.2000
15	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	Not reported	Eight individuals observed at 582 RD near Chhattargarh, Bikaner, 3.xii.2000

b. Plantation on both sides of the canal and reservoirs; c. Seepage from canals has led to rise in the water table, and the formation of interdunal reservoirs has resulted in new wetlands, thus changing the ground cover from xerophytic and psammophytic to hydrophytic and mesophytic plants; d. Displacement of grazers to non-command areas has exerted pressure on the already overgrazed countryside. This changed scenario is now attracting many water loving birds to the hot desert.

No detailed systematic study was made of the avifauna of the Thar desert, till Rahmani (1997) reported 213 species of birds, of which nearly half, including water birds, are those

that do not occur in the desert. In addition to the information from Rahmani (1997), the present study revealed five records of birds belonging to three families, observed for the first time in the area. They are, the Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*; Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*; Grey-headed Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*; White-capped Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus* and Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*. Besides these, ten species belonging to six families have also been found to extend their range further west and southwest because of the suitable habitat. The details of observation by Rahmani (1997) and present sightings are given in Table 1.

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Wildlife Institute of India,
Post Box 18, Chandrabani,
Dehra Dun 248 001, Uttarakhand,
India.
Email: anil@wiii.gov.in

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25. SIGHT RECORD OF POLYPHENIC FORMS OF *APPIAS ALBINA DARADA* C. & R. FELDER (LEPIDOPTERA: PIERIDAE) IN THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Common Albatross *Appias albina darada* C. & R. Felder, protected under Schedule II of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Anon. 1990), is one of the most abundant butterflies found at lower elevations in the Western Ghats. The species has a wide geographic range and is distributed almost throughout the Oriental Region (Larsen 1987). Both sexes are usually white, with the forewing having a narrow dark apical and a series of terminal markings. The females usually bear 4 to 5 additional apical white spots on the forewing.

During a recent study on insect diversity of New Amarambalam forests of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, a few specimens of *A. albina* were collected from the banks of River Karimpuzha at Meenmutti located at an elevation of 650 m during February 2000. The females showed polyphenism and two forms, namely form *semiflava* and form *flava* besides the usual female form were collected. The details of the polyphenic forms recorded are given below.

A. albina darada f. *semiflava*: The underside of the forewing apex and that of the hind wing are yellow, instead of white. Although Wynter-Blyth (1957) states that this form is not rare, only 5 specimens could be collected from Meenmutti in this study. Of these, 3 specimens were collected on 8.ii.2000 and 2 on 9.ii.2000 (Coll. C.F. Binoy). The specimens are deposited in the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) collections.

A. albina darada f. *flava*: This form is yellow on both the dorsal and ventral side and has been reported to be 'very rare in South India' by Wynter-Blyth (1957). A single specimen

was collected on 9.ii.2000 from the same locality as f. *semiflava*, and is deposited in the KFRI collections (Coll. C.F. Binoy).

Remarks

Occurrence of the polyphenic forms of *A. albina darada* coincided with the population build-up and migration of this species along with the pierids *A. indra shiva* Swinhoe, *A. wardii* Moore and *Cepora nadina remba* Moore in New Amarambalam during February 2000. It was interesting to note that these forms were not observed during rest of the year.

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C.F. BINOY

GEORGE MATHEW¹

Division of Entomology
Kerala Forest Research Institute,
Peechi 680 653, Kerala, India.
¹Email: mathew@kfri.org

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